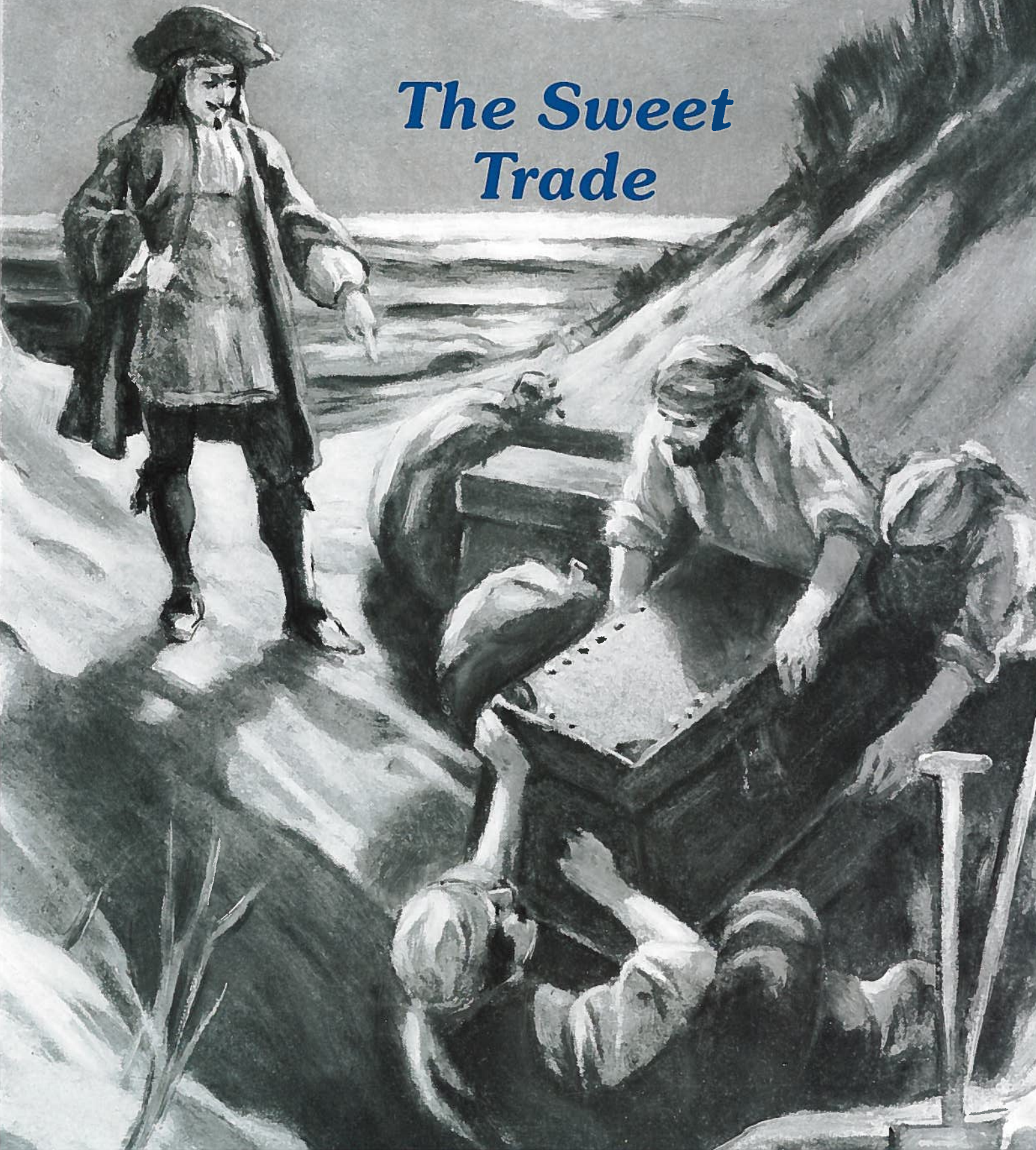


# TEXAS SHORES

## *The Sweet Trade*



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## ***Mica* wreck leads to further deep-water archaeological explorations**

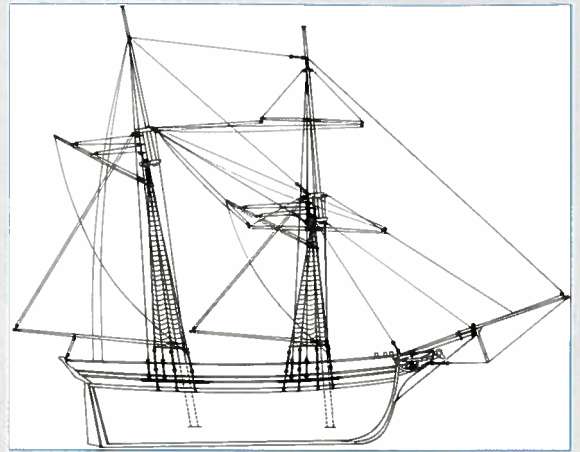
The mysterious vessel resting deep on the dark Gulf floor has never wanted to share its secrets, but it may be leading archaeologists to explore areas of science unreachable even to divers.

The *Mica* wreck, named after the oil field in which it was found, has continued to mystify archaeologists since its discovery by an ExxonMobil pipeline survey in February 2001. Despite equipment problems and just plain bad luck, the project — the deepest full archaeological exploration to date in the Gulf — has led to valuable scientific research and spurred interest in exploring other deep-water wrecks.

Texas A&M graduate student Toby Jones says that the attempts to recover artifacts from the *Mica* wreck have been costly, but worth the money scientifically. During the most recent exploration, another known wreck site was investigated and identified as the *Western Empire*, a vessel that historical records show wrecked in the Gulf. Jones, who has been involved in the *Mica* project since it began, says the identification of the *Western Empire* alone was worth the effort because the unidentified site was matched with a known vessel.

He is also satisfied with the data collected from the *Mica* wreck. "We've been there three times, but there is always more to learn about a wreck. We still have enough good data to write a meaningful report," says Jones. "We've already analyzed the artifacts we have — the copper sheathing and wood samples — and there are other artifacts there that we would have liked to recover, but it just doesn't seem like it's going to happen — at least in the near future."

In late 2002, famed oceanographer Sylvia Earle joined the team on an attempted exploration of the *Mica*, but ship problems prevented the expedition from ever taking place. The last attempt in mid January 2003 was aided by Deep Marine Technology Inc. of Houston (DMT), which provides underwater services for oil companies. DMT supplied a ship and remotely operated vehicle (ROV). The ROV was lowered into the water over the wreck, and although it reached the wreck, technical problems prevented any additional artifacts from reaching the light of day.



Jones points out that even though additional artifacts were not recovered from the *Mica*, the team learned valuable research and recovery methods through the process that will aid them in the future. "There are so many more wrecks out there. This is just the beginning of endless research possibilities," says Jones.

There are about 500 known shipwrecks in the Gulf similar to the *Mica* wreck according to Jones, and he believes the amount of research and exploration of these deep-water vessels will continue to increase. For Jones, the project has been a success. "We know what type of ship it (the *Mica*) was and approximately when it sank," says Jones. "We may never be able to pinpoint an exact name and identity for the vessel, however, this is the deepest shipwreck ever investigated by archaeologists in the Gulf. We have proven that this type of deep-water archaeological survey is possible, and that's extremely significant for future research."

As part of a federal requirement for the wreck and as part of his thesis, Jones is writing a final report that will be completed in October 2003. He has researched photographs of other vessels from the same timeframe and has been able to produce a replica of the vessel from those photos and research from the *Mica* wreck itself.

— Jean O'Dette

## 2 PREPARE TO BE BOARDED

We associate pirates with the fictionalized images viewed in countless movies. In reality, few pirates resembled Douglas Fairbanks Jr. or even



Jean Lafitte. Most were nameless, faceless men — and a few women — who found stealing on the high seas a more profitable lifestyle than working.



## 22 AT THE WATER'S EDGE: EXPLORING KLEBERG, KENEDY AND WILLACY COUNTIES

A national seashore and legendary ranches comprise most



of Kleberg, Kenedy and Willacy Counties. Sparse population and thousands of acres of undeveloped land don't mean the counties are free of controversies. Issues include drilling in the Padre Island National Seashore to dredging in the GIWW and



Laguna Madre to ferrying more visitors to Padre Island.

FRONT COVER — © CORBIS  
BACK COVER — JIM HINEY

**T**EXAS SHORES is published quarterly by the Texas Sea Grant College Program in an effort to promote a better understanding of the Texas marine environment. Sea Grant is a partnership of university, government and industry focusing on marine research, education and outreach. Nationally, Sea Grant began in 1966 with the passage of the Sea Grant Program and College Act. Patterned after the Land Grant Act of the 1860s, the Sea Grant concept is a broad-based scientific effort to better the world for all those living in and out of the sea.

In 1968, Texas A&M University received the distinction of being named among the nation's first six institutional award recipients. Three years later the school was designated a Sea Grant College. The university has a rich heritage of oceanography research dating back to 1949 when the program began. In addition, there is an ongoing program to get marine information to the public.



Sea Grant is a matching funds program. The Texas Sea Grant College Program itself is made possible through an institutional award from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, as well as appropriations from the Texas Legislature and local governments.

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TEXAS SHORES

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## *Prepare to be boarded*

*We pillage, we plunder, we rifle and loot.  
Drink up me 'earties, Yo Ho!  
We kidnap and ravage and don't give a hoot.  
Drink up me 'earties, Yo Ho!  
Yo Ho, Yo Ho! A pirate's life for me.*

FIRST VERSE OF THE SONG *Yo Ho, Yo Ho*  
(SUNG BY DISNEYLAND'S PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN)  
©1967 XAVIER ATENCIO & GEORGE BRUNS

**BY JIM HINEY**

**I**t must be the plundering, rifling, looting, kidnapping and ravaging that entices people to pirating because it certainly is not the fame and glory. A few pirates of centuries past attained a kind of morbid rock star popularity based on their villainous activities. Their names were household words: Capt. William Kidd, Henry Morgan, Bartholomew Roberts, Edward Teach — the notorious Blackbeard — and Jean Lafitte, the last and best known pirate preying in the Gulf of Mexico.

The vast majority of pirates were and are nameless and faceless. Lafitte alone had more than 1,000 men working for him at the zenith of his career, yet a scant handful are remembered by history.

Almost since the time people began transporting valuable cargo over water, there have been brazen pirates risking death to steal it. Some pirates acquired amazing riches comprising gold, silver, currency, jewelry and precious stones. But their booty also included linens, cloths, food, anchors, rope, medical supplies, spices and sugar.

If people valued it, pirates would steal it. The ancient Greek historian Herodotus begins his *Histories* chronicling the Persian Wars of 492-449 BC with stories of the Greeks and Persians pirating women from each other.

Even before that, the Greek poet Homer described piracy in the *Iliad*, written in 800 BC.

Certainly the history of the New World is replete with tales of pirate exploits. Spain was particularly hard hit by pirates during its reign over colonies in Mexico, Central America and South America. The French pirate Jean Florin captured three Spanish ships in 1523 as they neared the end of their voyage from the New World, near the Portuguese town of Cape St. Vincent, and seized a cargo of gold, pearls, coffee, precious stones and other goods — all of which had been stolen from the Aztec Indians by Hernando Cortes.



Spanish coins recovered from the pirate ship WHYDAH.

Sir Francis Drake and his crew looted 15 tons of Spanish gold and 100,000 silver pesos from the town of Nombre de Dios, near Panama in 1573. History records that the treasure would have been sufficient to build and equip 30 Elizabethan warships.

Historians consider the late 17th Century and early 18th Century as the Golden Age of piracy, made so by a number of factors. At the time piracy and privateering were considered legitimate occupations. Most European countries lacked strong professional navies. Most of the sea power was supplied by merchant fleets that were called into service as privateers.

At the same time, European countries were expanding their territories into the New World. Spain claimed much of the Caribbean and virtually all of Latin America, with its rich deposits of gold, silver and other precious metals, and commodities like tobacco.

European powers England, Holland and France, jealous of Spain's success, dispatched privateers to raid Spanish shipping, particularly in the Caribbean. The same lucrative prizes sought by privateers also attracted pure pirates to the region.

The Golden Age waned about 50 years after it began for several reasons as well. Navies grew in size and could more effectively control piracy; merchant ships carried less cargo and more guns, making them more difficult to capture; and

merchants found the risks of fencing pirate loot were more than they were willing to take, leaving pirates without customers.

Piracy continued to decline as the 19th Century progressed but the practice never completely died, mainly because greed is an inherent part of human character. Some people may be surprised to learn that modern acts of piracy occur as frequently, if not more so, today than 200 years ago. Modern pirates raid commercial vessels and private boats around the world, most frequently in the South China Sea.

They are less glamorous and more thug-like than their swashbuckling predecessors. Modern pirates embrace high-tech global positioning technology, fully automatic assault rifles and shoulder-launched rockets to overpower their victims.

Gone is visage of daring men in baggy clothing waving swords over their heads as they swung from their ships onto the decks of their conquests — an image created more by Hollywood than history. Errol Flynn and Douglas Fairbanks Jr. played well the parts of dashing, buccaneering heroes wearing large hooped earrings (although many pirates did wear earrings because they believed it improved their eyesight), but elaborate sets on studio sound stages and imaginative screenwriters have served only to distort the image of pirates.

Part of the problem is that there is little historical material to go by. Some pirates, like Lafitte, kept journals that survive today and tell of their exploits. The question is: Are the entries credible, exaggerations, lies or forgeries?

Most pirates were closed mouthed about their activities. They were loath to talk about their adventures for fear that they might be charged with a crime even years after they retired to dry land.

What remains are mainly stories of indeterminate origin passed from person to person and occasionally recounted to newspaper reporters decades later. Such is the case with Lafitte's pirates, although one of them and the wife of another did consent to interviews with a reporter before their deaths.

Copies of Lafitte's diaries reside in various museums around the state and offer a decent amount of information about his activities, says Tom Townsend, an author and history buff.

"I tend to believe a great deal of what he wrote in his diaries because I've never found anything that proves to me they were not written by him," says Townsend, a former Kemah resident who now lives in Rusk.

The same cannot be said for most of his followers. Of the hundreds of people who worked for Lafitte or lived in the settlement he called Campeche, the few who chose to remain in the Galveston Bay area after Lafitte's departure are the best remembered by history. The lives of Lafitte's most trusted lieutenant, James Campbell, and his wife Mary, Charles Cronea and "Crazy" Ben Dollivar were all subjects of newspaper stories published in the *Galveston Daily News*, *Galveston Weekly News* and the *Galveston Tri-Weekly News* during the latter part of the 19th Century and early part of the 20th Century.

In most cases the articles were based on anecdotal accounts, but Mary Campbell and Cronea broke with the code of pirate silence and granted interviews to a *Galveston Daily News* reporter.

These articles and anecdotal accounts form the basis for a good part of the story that follows, leading author and historian W.T. Block Jr. to offer a word of warning:

"When you're dealing with pirate stories you are by and large dealing with folklore and not history."

# Pirate fact and fiction

We extort, we pilfer, we filch and sack.  
Drink up me 'earties, Yo Ho!  
Maraud and embezzle and even hijack.  
Drink up me 'earties, Yo Ho!  
Yo Ho, Yo Ho! A pirate's life for me.

©1967 XAVIER ATENCIO & GEORGE BRUNS

**T**here are so many pirate stereotypes, it is hard to know where to begin — and where Hollywood and history ... uh ... folklore diverge.

Did pirates have peg legs, hooks and eye patches?

Would any self-respecting pirate walk around with a parrot on his shoulder?

Did they really fly the infamous Jolly Roger flag?

Were there female pirates?

Does “X” really mark the spot?

The best place to start is probably with the questions: What is a pirate and were they all considered criminals?

Today the term is applied broadly to anyone who takes the property of another without consent or legal right. In this country today a pirate is more likely someone who steals computer software or makes illegal copies of music and movie DVDs than someone who raids the ship carrying them.

But the earliest definitions of pirates — reaching back almost 2,000 years — ties them to the sea. They were people who attacked shipping and coastal cities without legal authority to do so. That definition holds true today, although coastal cities are rarely the target of pirate raids.

Piracy is an act committed for personal gain, as opposed to terrorism, which is politically motivated. The most notorious act of terrorism on the high seas was probably the October 1985 hijacking of the Italian cruise ship *Achille Lauro*. Four heavily armed Palestinian terrorists seeking the release of 50 Palestinian prison-

ers in Israel took over the ship carrying 400 passengers and crew. They killed a disabled American passenger, Leon Klinghoffer, and threw him overboard with his wheelchair.

Pirates also differed from “privateers,” who were basically pirates given the legal authority by one country to raid the shipping of an enemy nation. Legal authority was granted under a document called a “letter of marque.”

Throughout his stay in Galveston, Lafitte was a privateer working under letters of marque from the governments of New Cartegená (Colombia), Mexico, Venezuela and La Plata (Argentina).

Letters of marque protected privateers from criminal prosecution by the countries issuing them and neutral countries, but they meant nothing to the enemy nation that was the subject of attack. Privateers captured by the enemy nation were often treated as pirates and executed by hanging.

Today people often use the terms pirate, buccaneer and corsair interchangeably, but the words are not the same. Buccaneers were French immigrants to the Caribbean, particularly the island of Hispaniola, who were at first just hunters. The name came from their practice of smoke curing meat over grills called “boucans.”

Corsairs were pirates of the Mediterranean Sea and the Barbary Coast of Africa. Their name most likely derived from the island of Corsica.

The vast majority of pirate captains do not deserve the reputation foisted upon them

as evil cutthroats. Far from angels, most captains were at least fair men who treated crew and captive alike with an even hand, partly out of necessity. The captain needed the good graces of his men to keep his position. Without the formal and disciplined structure of the military to support him, a captain who treated his men badly or failed to attack promising ships might quickly find himself on the losing end of a mutiny.

Captains were usually elected by the crew and commanded by their consent. Crews frequently voted on all manner of issues, like how to split their ill-gotten booty. A ship's articles — the rules that every pirate signed and agreed to live by before a voyage began — stated how plundered loot was divided. Usually the captain received an even share and a half and the officers received a share and a quarter. The rest of the crew received one share each. Some treasure was more easily divided than others. Coins, like the legendary pieces of eight, were cut up into smaller change. Jewels were not as easily divisible and were often crudely cut.

Aside from the captain, a ship's officers usually included a quartermaster, who was effectively second in command. He saw to the distribution of the plundered goods among the crew, was in charge of carrying out punishments, led boarding parties onto other ships and he saw that quarreling crewmen were taken ashore to settle their disputes by dueling with gun and sword.

Other officers might include a boat-

swain, who was in charge of ship's maintenance and stores, a gunner, sail maker, carpenter and a surgeon.

Crewmembers also had a say in what to do with captives and how to punish fellow crewmembers who violated the ship's articles. Hollywood theatrics to the contrary, there is no solid proof that anyone ever walked the plank. Pirates basically used three forms of punishment — flogging, marooning and throwing a person overboard. These punishments could be gruesome and were often fatal.

“Moses' Law,” as floggings were known, consisted of 39 lashes with a particularly nasty type of whip called a “Cat-O'-Nine Tail.” The punishment took its name from a supposed Biblical reference that 40 lashes would kill a man, so 39 was the most that could be meted out and leave the victim alive.

In truth, a lesser number of lashes could easily kill a man and floggings often comprised less than 39 lashes. The captain and crew usually voted on the number of lashes based on the severity of the crime.

Once the flogging was over, a crewman fetched a bucket of salty seawater and threw it on the victim's open wounds with the intent of creating more pain. The practice often led to a slow, painful death from gangrene or other infections.

Throwing the culprit overboard is fairly self-explanatory. Depending on the ship's distance from shore and the victim's ability to swim, drowning was the most common outcome.

The last and perhaps worst punishment was marooning. It was reserved for the most serious crimes of murder, rape or thievery. The condemned was taken to a desolate spot of land — one that offered no means of food or shelter. In some cases, the land was nothing more than a sandbar visible only during low tide and awash with the sea during high tide.

He was left there with only the clothes he was wearing, a pistol, some gunpowder, some shot and a bottle of rum or water. With virtually no hope of rescue, the marooned mate's only alternative to an unpleasant and possibly slow death was suicide.

Peg legs and shiny metal hooks as they appear in movies are Hollywood cre-

ations. In the story *Treasure Island*, Long John Silver uses crutches in place of his missing leg — a fact corrupted by Hollywood into a peg leg. However, the prosthetics used by film pirates were based in fact.



Severe injuries were common in pirate battles. A hand might be lost to the swift blade of an opponent. A leg could be sufficiently injured that amputation was the only alternative to death. In each case, the pirate would probably die anyway. Even the best medical care in those days was poor by modern standards and based on land. Few pirate ships had doctors aboard and the crew worried little about sanitary conditions.

But if the pirate did survive, he would most likely look for a useful prosthetic to diminish his disability. After all, a disabled pirate could not participate in plundering other ships and thus would not receive a share of the booty. Amputated legs were replaced by whatever was found aboard ship. A wooden plank might be fashioned into a crutch or, although there is no documented case, a new leg.

There are no accounts of pirates wearing hooks, but it is just as possible as one wearing a wooden leg. A hook was fairly easy to fashion from available supplies and would prove useful to performing many chores at sea.

Eye patches were not unique to pirates. They were and still are common pieces of fashion for those who have lost an eye or suffered other disfigurement they wish to hide.

No one knows for sure whether pirates took pets or other animals to sea with them, but it is highly unlikely that a parrot or any other bird perched on the shoulder of any sailor short of the fictitious Long John Silver.

While they were on land, pirates lived and acted no differently than other people. They probably kept pets just like their non-seafaring neighbors. Whether they took those pets to sea is a matter of conjecture. One theory is that pirates did take pets aboard ship to serve as emergency food rations. If that was the case, a pirate would have been much more likely to take along a pet chicken or, better yet, a turkey.

Parrots offer very slim pickings.

Food issues aside, imagine the potential mess posed by having a bird on your shoulder all day.

Without doubt, pirates flew Jolly Rogers and other flags, called “Jacks.” The Jack was one of a pirate's best weapons.

Privateers always sailed under the flag of a nation. The buccaneers often raised a red flag, or “joli rouge,” along with their national flag when signaling another ship to surrender. A joli rouge meant that no quarter — or mercy — would be given the crew if they resisted capture. The flag itself was often sufficient incentive for a ship to surrender. It was better to be looted and left alive than face the angry swords of a pirate crew.

The term Jolly Roger could well be a corruption of joli rouge, but that does not explain how the red flag turned black. One of the most intriguing theories involves ships carrying plague victims. These ships flew black flags to warn others to stay away. Pirates are thought to have adopted



the custom of flying black flags to keep other ships away and thus disguise their activities.

The black flag then gained a white cross that somehow became a skull and crossbones. In truth, the skull was common to almost all Jolly Rogers. The flags differed from pirate to pirate in what accompanied the skull. Caribbean pirate Jack Rackham's Jolly Roger featured crossed swords under the skull.

But like their red forbearers, Jolly Rogers served as notice to victims that they had better surrender, or else.

The vast majority of pirates were men but there were a few female pirates, most notably the Caribbean pirates Anne Bonny and Mary Read.

Bonny was the illegitimate daughter of an Irish attorney and one of his maids. In a bit of ironic foreshadowing, Bonny was dressed as a boy during her early years and passed off as the son of one of her father's friends.

Bonny's father and mother eventually lived together openly, and the trio sailed from Ireland to the Carolinas, where her father practiced law and became a successful merchant. Anne was a fiercely independent girl who thrashed at least one young man who made unwarranted advances.

She married a young soldier named James Bonny, who took her to the West Indies in search of work. There she met the pirate Jack Rackham, who swept her off her feet and onto his ship, where she served disguised as a man.

Like Bonny, Mary Read was an illegitimate child, but her birth was due to her mother's indiscretions. And, like Bonny, Read was dressed as a boy. But her charade was intended to pass her off as her deceased brother, a part she played for a large portion of her life.

She apparently had a taste for adventure, so she found a job as a footboy aboard a British naval ship. A few years later Read jumped ship and joined a British army infantry unit, where she met and fell in love with a soldier in her unit. After confessing her true identity to him, the couple married, bought out their military commissions and opened The Three Horseshoes Tavern.

For the first time in her life, Read lived as a woman.

Her happiness did not last long. Read's husband died at an early age and business declined at the tavern. Once again, Read took the sea disguised as a man. She set sail on a boat bound for the West Indies, where she hoped to find prosperity again. But the boat was attacked by Rackham's pirate crew and she was taken captive aboard the *Revenge*.

Shortly thereafter, Bonny discovered



Anne Bonny

Read's secret and the two became fast friends. Rackham, too, learned Read was a woman and agreed to keep her secret.

By all accounts, there was nothing ladylike about Bonny and Read when it came to fighting. The pair were fierce pirates whose skill and courage gained them the admiration and respect of their shipmates. One shipmate said the women were "resolute and ready to board or undertake anything that was hazardous."

Rackham was a fairly successful Caribbean pirate, capturing many ships. As was common among pirates, he often offered his captives a chance to join his crew. One young conscript caught Read's eye. She revealed her secret to him and he returned her affection. Some time later, the rookie pirate got into a

quarrel with a much larger and more experienced pirate. As was the custom, a duel was scheduled for the next day.

Knowing her love was no match for his opponent, Read picked a quarrel with the pirate and demanded they settle their difference immediately. They rowed to shore and began dueling with pistols and swords.

Both fired their guns but missed, leaving them to finish the fight with their cutlasses. The duel continued for a good length of time, with the man's strength advantage countered by Read's superior quickness and intelligence.

Finally the man lunged at Read and stumbled — an error he might have recovered from had Read not taken the opportunity to rip open her shirt and expose her gender. The pirate halted his attack for a brief moment as he gawked at her in disbelief. Read quickly swung her cutlass, nearly severing his head.

An honorable man, Read's love showed up for his duel at the appointed time, only to learn that he no longer had an opponent. The pair wed soon thereafter.

Read's second marriage was briefer than her first. Not long after the duel, in the fall of 1720, the governor of Jamaica learned Rackham's ship was nearby and he ordered troops to capture it and her crew. Legend has it that Rackham and his crew, who had captured a lucrative prize the day before, were drunk when the soldiers arrived. As Read and Bonny tried to fight off the invaders, Rackham and his crew covered below deck.

All were captured and sentenced to hang. Both women stalled their executions by revealing they were pregnant. The stay ultimately did not benefit Read. She died of fever while in prison before delivering her baby.

No one knows what happened to Bonny. She delivered her baby and, after obtaining several more stays of execution, quietly vanished from the prison and its records. Legend is that someone — most likely her wealthy and influential father or a local doctor who secretly loved her — bought her pardon and whisked her away to the American colonies, ending her pirating days.

The idea of buried treasure is mostly

mythical with a few exceptions — one of those being Texas' most famous pirate — Jean Lafitte. Capt. William Kidd was probably the genesis of buried treasure tales. He was a British privateer who found so much success in the Atlantic, near New York, and the West Indies in the latter half of the 17th Century that the British hired him to do away with French pirates in the New World.

Kidd took the 34-gun ship the British gave him and turned to piracy in the very waters he was supposed to clean up. His career as a pirate was short but included the 400-ton treasure ship *Quedagh Merchant* (by comparison, Kidd's ship was 284 tons). Kidd eventually died on the gallows in England, but not before burying some of his treasure in places still undiscovered.

The vast majority of pirates were spendthrifts — made so by the inherent danger of their profession. Death could come quickly at any time, so pirates lived for the moment. They usually squandered their plunder on food, women and liquor as soon as they reached shore.

Popular legend has it that Lafitte, after being ordered to leave Galveston by the United States, was seen making several trips to the Clear Creek area where he buried treasure along the creek's banks. It was not the first time he had buried part of his treasure.

Lafitte wrote in his diaries that he buried treasure at Pine Island and Baratavia Bay, both in Louisiana, when he was based on the island of Grand Terre. According to the diaries, Lafitte never retrieved the loot he buried in Louisiana, says author Tom Townsend. These two areas have subsided heavily since the time of Lafitte and "anything there is probably going to stay there," he says.

"It is my personal belief that he did bury treasure in Galveston Bay and for the most part he got back for it," says Townsend. "If there is anything that he personally buried and left around Galveston Bay, he had either forgotten about it by the time he wrote the diaries or he didn't leave it."

In his book, *Texas Treasure Coast*, Townsend also recounts the tale of Lafitte's largest haul — a load of silver bars that today would be worth more than \$6 million — taken from the Spanish ship *Santa Rosa*.

Lafitte sent the silver by wagon to St. Louis, but the treasure did not make it. Near Hendrix Lake in far northeast Texas, the man leading the wagon convoy learned there were 200 Mexican cavalry troops nearby, writes Townsend. The man had the three heaviest wagons pushed into the lake, where they disappeared below the surface. The remainder of the convoy headed for the Arkansas border.

Within miles of the border, the Mexican soldiers overtook the convoy and killed most of the men in it, including the leader, writes Townsend. Some of the survivors managed to escape and report back to Lafitte. The Mexican soldiers did not have a hard time figuring out where the missing wagons were, but they had no way of transporting them to their base in San Antonio.

During the ensuing years, various problems prevented Mexican salvage operations and the Mexicans eventually forgot about the treasure. But the legend circulated throughout the area and several people tried to find the wagons to no avail. A fisherman on the lake in 1920 came the closest when he pulled up three silver bars, writes Townsend.

"Since that time every possible piece of diving and treasure hunting equipment has been used in the lake, which only covers a few acres," says Townsend. "Nothing more has been found except a few iron wheel rims and other artifacts from the wagon train."

Townsend suspects that Lafitte returned to Texas several years after he was forced out and recovered the silver in Hendrix Lake.

"Who would have had a better knowledge of where to find the divers in the 1840s or 1850s to get the treasure?" Townsend asks.

The money he made from selling the treasure helped make him a wealthy St. Louis businessman, says Townsend.

Given the romance and mystery surrounding pirates, it is easy to overlook the enormous contributions they made to the development of this nation. The colonial government in North Carolina had economic arrangements with a number of pirates, including Blackbeard. So long as the pirates preyed on Spanish shipping, they were free and welcome to spend their loot in colonial cities.

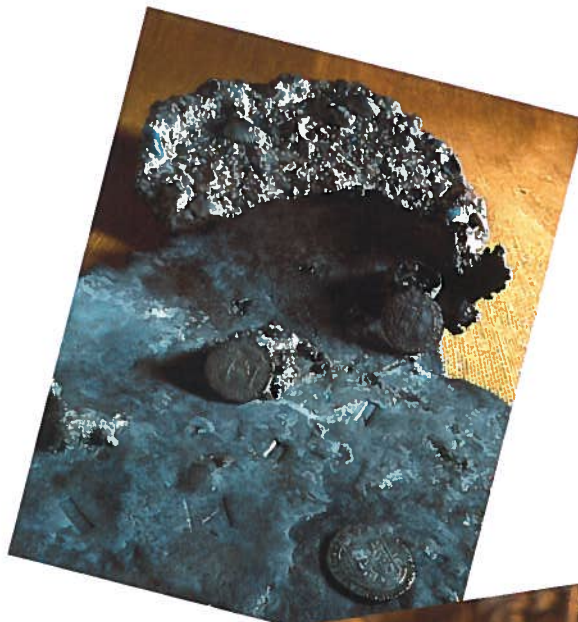
During the Revolutionary War, there



were more than 10 times as many privateering vessels as there were ships in the Continental Navy. They helped the war effort greatly by attacking English ships.

Lafitte was largely responsible for keeping New Orleans out of British hands during the War of 1812. During his years of plundering Spanish and French ships from his headquarters in Louisiana, Lafitte knew the bayous of the area better than most natives.

The British sought to take advantage of his knowledge and tried to bribe him to guide them through the backwaters for a surprise attack on New Orleans in 1815. Lafitte asked for time to think about the British offer, and then he contacted the governor of the Louisiana Territory, William Claiborne, to tell him of the British plan and to offer his assistance. Lafitte provided enough am-



nous search for victims, punctuated by moments of excitement when the crew sighted a likely ship and attacked. With little to occupy their time, crewmen often quarreled and fought.

Ensuring adequate food and drink was a major challenge at sea. Pirates generally carried large supplies of beer because any freshwater they carried soon became undrinkable due to contamination by saltwater. Crewmen generally ate a type of biscuit called hard tack and they took a supply of citrus fruit to provide Vitamin C.

A few ships sailed with hens to provide meat and eggs. Otherwise, pirates turned to the almost limitless supply of sea turtles for their protein needs. Crewmen would carry the turtles below deck, turn them over and strap them down. The turtles survived for a good bit of time on little or no food or water. When the crew wanted meat, they brought a number of turtles above deck and slaughtered them.

After a successful cruise, pirates returned to shore for short-lived sessions of debauchery including drinking, gambling, fine food and tainted women. Pirates sometimes spent thousands of coins, generally pieces of eight, in a single night.

Then it was back to work preparing their ship for its next voyage, scraping the hull clean of barnacles and seaweed, repairing and replacing the rigging and sails, and restocking with provisions.

Given the hazards of battle and their spending habits, very few pirates enjoyed lengthy and wealthy retirements. Some successfully left piracy to pursue less dangerous livelihoods on shore. But a good number ended their pirating days at the end of a rope.

When the pirates returned from their plundering escapades, they were ready for fun. If returning from a successful voyage, the pirates quickly depleted their blood stained prizes in the local taverns, and alehouses. Often times, drunken pirates in their daze for pleasures, spent thousands of pieces-of-eight in a single night (in those days 10 pieces-of-eight bought a small herd of cattle!). Pleasures such as rum, food, wine and gambling, made poor tavern

masters rich overnight. In short, the pirates wasted in the taverns all they had earned, by giving themselves to all manner of voluptuousness they could afford. Life on land wasn't just fun and games. For the successful pirate it involved a heck of a lot of work. This work was carried out before the pirates were to sail again, and involved preparing the ship for the next voyage and making sure it was in good working order. After a long voyage, barnacles and seaweed would attach to the bottom of the vessel, and the bottom of the vessel would need to be careened (scraping debris from the bottom of the ship). After a good battle, sails and rigging would also have to be replaced, or repaired. One of the most important tasks was to stock the ship well enough with fresh supplies of water and food for the next voyage.

Pirates were generally tried in admiralty courts — courts created in England in the 1340s to address crimes at sea. A lucky pirate might save his own life and gain a pardon by testifying against his crewmates.

Those convicted were sentenced to hang, a punishment that could be carried out anytime once 10 days had passed. Hangings were public spectacles meant to send a strong message about the consequences of pirating. Condemned pirates were taken by cart to the gallows — usually located near the water at the low tide mark — led by someone carrying a silver oar, the symbol of the admiralty court.

Once at the gallows, a chaplain gave a sermon — sometimes lasting an hour or more — about the evils of piracy and asking that the condemned repent. The pirate was then offered a chance to make a final statement before being swung off the cart. The force of the swing rarely broke the victim's neck, so he was subjected to a torturous death by asphyxiation.

Crewmen of less note were usually buried face down below the high water mark or left hanging until three tides had passed over them. The more notorious pirates were often covered with tar, encased in an iron framework or chains and hung from a scaffold in a conspicuous place by the water's edge. There they remained, an example to all, until there was nothing left of the body.

It was a fate that Lafitte was able to avoid.

munition and supplies that the American artillery was able to maintain a constant bombardment of English forces, preventing them from establishing any kind of base. He also led raiding parties through the swamps against the British.

Many historians believe the Americans would have lost control of New Orleans had it not been for Lafitte's aid.

Hollywood's screen epics brought to life the romantic image of pirates that has existed since the late 17th Century. John Esquemeling's popular book *The Buccaneers of America*, published in 1678, and Charles Johnson's 1724 book *A General History of the Robberies and Murders of the most Notorious Pyrates* published in 1724, told of daring exploits of pirate captains and were the first works to glamorize piracy.

In truth, pirates led hard, dangerous lives.

Life at sea was a boring and monoto-



# Pirate of the Gulf

We kindle and char, inflame and ignite.

Drink up me 'earties, Yo Ho!

We burn up the city, we're really a fright.

Drink up me 'earties, Yo Ho!

Yo Ho, Yo Ho! A pirate's life for me.

— ©1967 XAVIER ATENCIO & GEORGE BRUNS

Winston Churchill once described Russia as a “Riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.”

He could have well been talking about Jean Lafitte.

Lafitte remains one of the most mysterious characters in American history. Very little is known of his life before he appeared in New Orleans at the beginning of the 19th Century. His birthplace has been variously reported as one of the French towns of Bordeaux, Marseilles or St. Malo, or the Caribbean Island of Santo Domingo, Spain and Haiti.

Some historians believe he was born in Santo Domingo because there were a large number of people there with the surname Lafitte who immigrated to Louisiana. That argument makes sense only if you believe his last name was really Lafitte. A number of sources say he took the name Lafitte from a family servant.

The privateer himself added to the mystery by spelling his name Lafitte, Laffite and Laffitte at different times in his life. Authors and historians most frequently spell his name with one “f” and two “t”s.

He also spun stories of his past meant to perpetuate his air of mystery. Depending on whom he talked to he was the son of French gentry who died on the guillotine; he was a refugee from Spanish control of the Caribbean

islands; or he fought in Napoleon’s army.

An article in the April 21, 1878 issue of the *Galveston Daily News* described Lafitte as “a well informed, handsome man about six feet two inches in height, strongly built with large hazel eyes and black hair, and generally wore a mous-tache. He dressed in a green uniform and otter skin cap. He was a man of polite and easy manners, of retired habits, generous disposition and of such a winning address that his influence over his followers was almost absolute.”

Lafitte was extremely well read for a man of his time and occupation, and he is described as an excellent diplomat. Truly a man without a country, he lived in New Orleans through three federal governments — all in 1803. The Spanish formally ceded control of the land that would become the Louisiana Purchase to the French. Three weeks later, the French sold the land to the United States.

Then Lafitte lived in Texas during the time that Spain was losing its hold on the territory to Mexican revolutionaries. He showed allegiance to the countries that granted him letters of marque, but he saved his greatest respect and obedience to the United States — a country that never employed him. In fact at one point in time while he ran his privateering empire from Galveston, Lafitte wrote a letter to the American government seeking compensation for his losses during the Battle of New Orleans. As far

as can be determined, his request fell on deaf ears.

Yet Lafitte still deeply respected the American constitution and he hoped that his settlement in Galveston might one day operate under a similar set of laws. He absolutely never attacked American shipping, although a few of his captains did so. They proved to be the undoing of Lafitte's career.

In his diaries, Lafitte admits that another reason he tried to stay in the good graces of the American government was "because they were a Navy of small ships," quotes Townsend. "They were a Navy of ex-pirates and privateers. They knew how to chase me into the places that the English and the Spanish ships could not get to."

Famed historian J. Frank Dobie, in his 1928 article, *The mystery of Lafitte's treasure*, wrote of him:

*Some historians have glorified Jean Lafitte as patriot; others have denounced him as pirate; hardly one who has written of Louisiana or Texas has neglected him. Folk whose only knowledge of history consists of inherited tradition — a history far better known than that of authenticated documents and a history always of picture and favor — tell of his daring adventures and look for his legendary millions all the way from the keys of Florida to Point (sic) Isabel at the mouth of the Rio Grande. They call him the 'Pirate of the Gulf.'*

Lafitte and his closest allies steadfastly denied they were pirates. They admitted to being slave traders and privateers — and they probably were so, at least while they were based in Galveston.

The earliest references to Lafitte say he and his older brother Pierre (although there is some debate about whether they were actually related) operated a blacksmith shop in New Orleans in 1803. The shop turned out to be a front where the Lafitte brothers sold the cloth, linens, spices, furniture and other non-monetary plunder from their smuggling and pirating activities.

The Lafitte brothers carried on their business from their blacksmith shop from about 1803 to 1808. High customs taxes on merchandise they moved on the Mississippi River as well as increasing tariffs on slaves severely cut into their profits, prompting Jean Lafitte to consider moving his headquarters out of New Orleans.

He set his sights on Baratavia Bay, an outlet to the Gulf of Mexico due south of New Or-

leans. It seemed the perfect site. There were three islands — Grande Terre, Grande Isle and Cheniere Caminada — near the mouth of the bay. Any ship sailing along the Mississippi River had to pass by these islands.

Place artillery on the islands facing the river and the Gulf of Mexico, Lafitte realized, and his men could deal with any hostile overtures made toward his operations. He based his empire on Grand Terre — an island paradise in the early 1800s with ample foliage surrounded by waters alive with crab, shrimp, flounder, seatrout and black drum, among other things.

Lafitte invited the members of his crews, about 1,000 men strong, to make their homes on the islands, thereby furnishing himself with a readily available fighting force to further fight off attack — not that Lafitte worried about attack.

The Louisiana Purchase had doubled America's size with the stroke of a pen, but no such stroke could increase the size of the country's military or produce enough money to pay for military expansion.

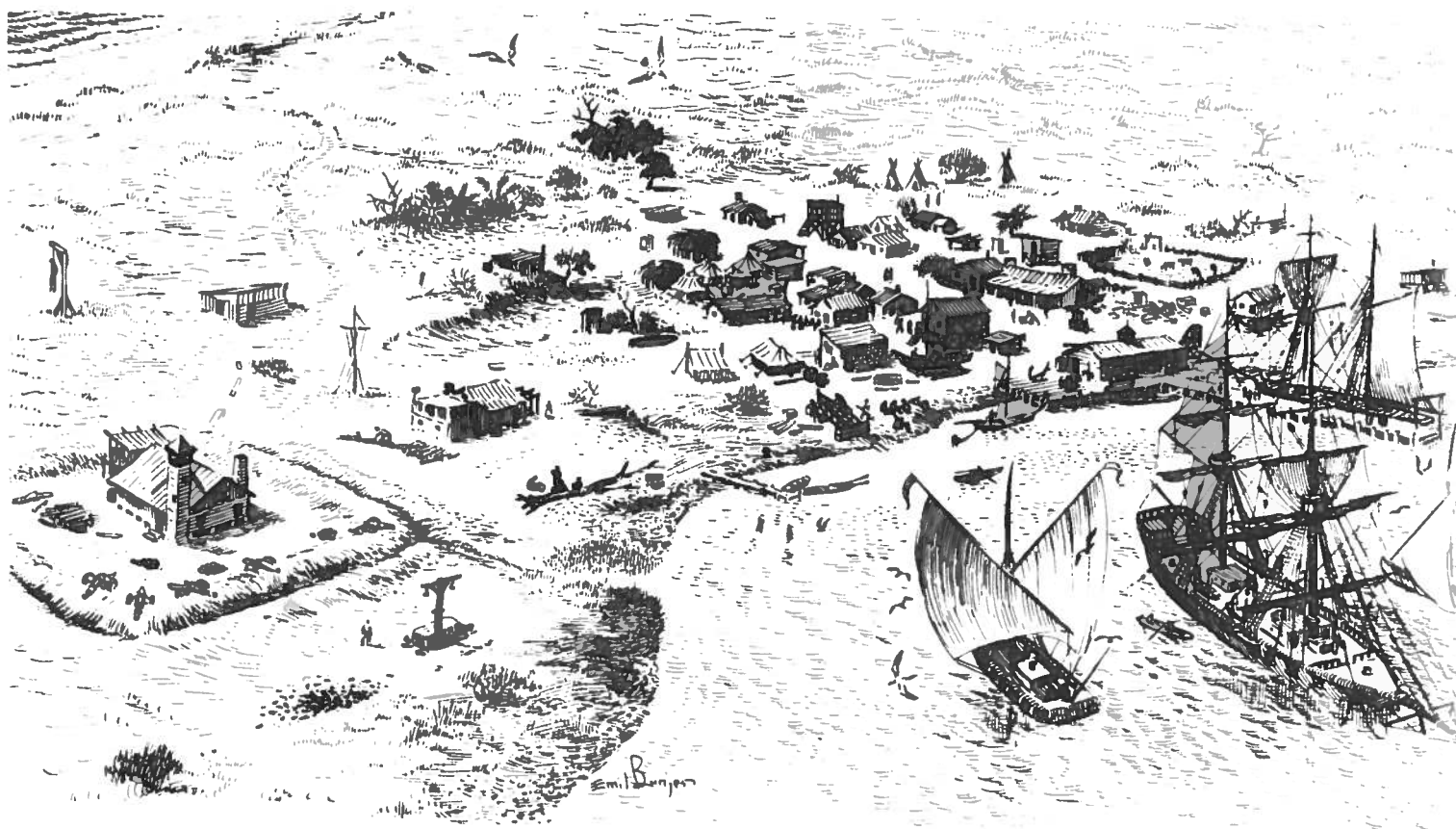
America's defenses were stationed to protect the much more heavily populated East Coast. The country had neither the men nor the nerve to attack an operation that technically was not criminal enterprise.

By all appearance, Lafitte and his men plundered only shipping designated under letters of marque from several Latin American countries. His standing order barred any of his ships from raiding American ships, a mandate he delivered with the warning, "Attack an American ship and die."

For several years the Lafittes continued to smuggle goods and slaves tax- and tariff-free from Baratavia Bay to New Orleans, much to the knowledge of Gov. Claiborne and other American officials. They were forced to ignore Lafitte's operation because he was intensely popular — due in equal parts to his personal charisma and because he sold much-needed commodities to cash-strapped settlers at bargain basement prices.

By 1813, Claiborne finally found a reason to menace Lafitte and tear down his smuggling empire. A year earlier, the United States had declared war on the British and the English enemy had captured the northern part of the Mississippi Valley with an eye to taking control of New Orleans and the rest of the western frontier.

With the northern land under control, the British would almost certainly attack from the Gulf of Mexico, Claiborne felt. The Gulf approach to the Mississippi River was at present



*Campeachy, Pirate Stronghold*

An artist's rendition of Lafitte's settlement in Galveston. His headquarters, Maison Rouge, is at far left.

controlled by Lafitte, and Claiborne feared the privateer would lend aid to the British.

Lafitte was publicly charged with the crime of smuggling and a warrant was issued for his arrest. His knowledge of the bayous allowed him to evade capture for several months, until U.S. customs agents stumbled across him and his brother in a secluded cove. The Lafittes gave up without a struggle and were taken to jail, where they quickly posted bond.

The pair failed to show up for their trial two weeks later, making Claiborne fume and dispatch troops to effect his capture. Again, Lafitte eluded his pursuers — and brazenly so. At one point wanted posters appeared around the city offering \$500 reward for Jean Lafitte's capture. Shortly thereafter, the citizens of New Orleans awoke to find all of Lafitte's wanted posters gone, replaced by posters offering \$1,500 reward to anyone who captured Claiborne and delivered him to Grand Terre.

In September 1814, the British government sent agents to Grand Terre to offer Lafitte a bribe and a few threats to obtain his help lead-

ing English forces through the swamps for an attack on New Orleans. Specifically, Lafitte was given letters from members of the Royal Command offering him a commission in the Royal Navy and an undisclosed amount of money. The letters also threatened the destruction of his empire in Baratavia Bay if he declined their offer.

Lafitte asked for two weeks to think over the proposition, but his guests were barely out of sight before he wrote a letter of warning to Claiborne and offered his services if Claiborne agreed to drop the charges against him and his brother.

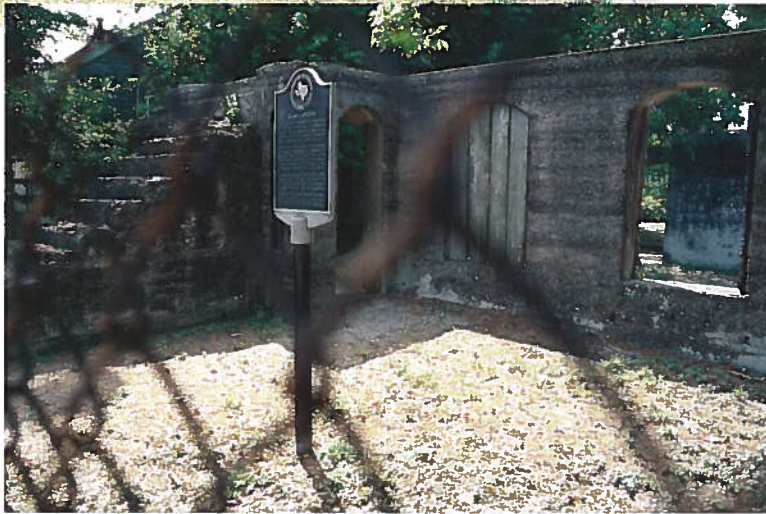
Claiborne answered Lafitte's by sending a small army of men, six gunboats and the warship *Carolina* to the privateer stronghold. Lafitte believed strongly that there was no way Claiborne would turn down his offer, so he let the small armada approach without resistance.

When the ships sailed within range, they began pounding the island with cannons and mortars. The soldiers landed on the beach and put torches to buildings that had not already been destroyed. Then they looted his warehouses and seized his ships. Lafitte and about 100 of his





The remains of Twelve Gables in Galveston, which was built on the site of Maison Rouge.



The site of Maison Rouge, on Harborside Drive between 14th and 15th streets, still exists and is denoted by a historic marker. A chain link fence now protects the site. Contrary to popular belief, the ruins standing on the site are not the remnants of Maison Rouge, but rather the House of 12 Gables built on the same site by sea captain J.W. Hendricks in 1885.

During its zenith, Campeche attracted all manner of cutthroats, gamblers, cheats, murderers and other criminals seeking to avoid punishment for offenses committed in the United States. The population swelled from about 100 in mid-1817 to almost 1,000 by the end of the year.

Among the new arrivals was a man with a colorful past of his own, who already knew Lafitte and who was destined to become one of Lafitte's most trusted lieutenants.

James Campbell was an Irishman, born in 1786, who moved with his parents to Boston in 1790. He became an apprentice to a

Boston sail maker around 1800. Early in 1812 Campbell enlisted in the U.S. Navy, where he was assigned as a sail maker aboard the *U.S.S. Constitution*.

In August of that year he took a position as gunner during a brief but violent battle with the British frigate *Guerriere*. The American's firepower dismantled the British ship, resulting in the *Constitution's* famous nickname — Old Ironsides.

Early in 1813, Campbell was reassigned as sail maker to Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry's Lake Erie naval squadron stationed at Erie, Pennsylvania. Again, he served as a gunner, this time on Perry's ship, the *U.S.S. Lawrence*, when the squadron fought the British fleet during the Battle of Lake Erie in September 1813.

He fought aboard the *Lawrence* until it began to sink, then he helped row Perry to the *U.S.S. Niagra*. Shortly after the *Lawrence* sank, the British fleet surrendered.

Campbell was reassigned to the *Constitution* and then the *U.S.S. Constellation* before he left the Navy in 1814.

He soon sailed aboard a merchant vessel to New Orleans, where he first met Lafitte and Aury before trying his hand at smuggling trade goods up the Red River. While in Natchitoches, La. in late 1814, Campbell met Mary Sabinal, the woman destined to become his wife.

She invited him to visit her whenever possible at her home in Texas. She lived with her parents at Crow's Landing, where her stepfather operated a ferry across the Sabine River at a point on the Texas-Louisiana border that is now part of Toledo Bend Reservoir.

Campbell returned to New Orleans and signed aboard the *Hotspur*, a Colombian-flagged ship sailing in the service of Aury under the command of a former U.S. Navy officer and operating under a privateer's commission from the fledgling republic of Colombia.

Early in 1815 the *Hotspur* ran into two Spanish cruisers off the coast of Cuba. Outgunned and outmanned, the *Hotspur* was soon in the grasp of grappling hooks from both cruisers. Somehow she broke free and fled for what is now Belize, her decks strewn with blood and bodies. Campbell was one of the wounded left ashore. He spent several months in Belize recovering before returning to Louisiana and coastal smuggling.

One day early in 1816, Campbell arrived at Crow's Ferry in a sloop loaded with smuggled



wares that he had bought on credit from Aury. Mary Campbell later remembered that her suitor “soon rendered himself quite the favorite ... by virtue of his good humor and the narration ... of his haps and mishaps on land and sea.”

They were married following a whirlwind courtship and the couple settled down to raise cattle and hogs. But life on the farm did not compare with the adventure of the sea. When one of Lafitte’s recruiters stopped off at Crow’s Ferry in the spring of 1817, Campbell convinced his wife to move to Galveston. The Campbells arrived at Campeche in June 1817 with a wagonload of household goods, 300 cattle and a large herd of swine.

Lafitte considered Campbell too young to command when he first arrived, so Campbell spent the rest of the year ashore attending to administrative duties as first assistant to Ramon Espagno, Campeche’s treasurer and secretary of state.

Campbell was also one of five men assigned as judges of Lafitte’s newly created tribunal or admiralty court. He carried out his duties well, giving Lafitte a trusted ally during a time when he trusted the riff-raff at Campeche less and less.

Lafitte’s privateers prospered in the Gulf of Mexico. They brought back huge cargoes of loot, both material and human. Campeche eventually had slave pens large enough to hold 1,000 people. Campbell noted in his memoirs that of the 308 slaves he brought to Galveston after a cruise, 200 were bought by a planter from Mississippi.

Among the men who dealt in the slave trade with Lafitte was future Alamo hero Jim Bowie. Nederland-based author W.T. Block Jr., has written extensively about Lafitte and his operation for newspapers and history journals. One of his articles cited John Bowie, who admitted that he and brothers Jim and Rezin realized a \$65,000 profit from the 1,500 illegal Africans purchased from Lafitte at Galveston between 1818 and 1820 and resold mostly in Louisiana.

Campbell’s loyalty to Lafitte paid off in 1818, when he was sent to sea in command of the schooner *Concord*, a 120-ton privateer armed with five guns and a crew of 75. During a six-week cruise, Campbell captured five Spanish prizes carrying \$100,000 in gold doubloons and an equal value of silver, hardware, dry goods and other cargo.

From that cruise on, Campbell led Lafitte’s captains in the amount of loot and number of prizes returned to Campeche.

An honorable man much like his boss, Campbell treated his crew sternly but fairly and treated his captives mercifully. Frenchman Charles Cronea, who was a 14-year-old cabin

boy on Campbell’s last cruise in 1820, later recalled that a shot across the bow of a Spanish ship was usually sufficient incentive for surrender.

“Sometimes a Spaniard would show fight, and our gunners would put a round shot into her,” said Cronea. “Then you should hear the Spanish yell and holler at us. They always surrendered quickly after that.”

Campbell’s crew then removed all valuables, rum, tobacco, food and fresh water before scuttling or burning the captured ship. The crew was set free in their longboats.

“A good many people think we used to cut throats and make those we captured walk the plank, but that is all a lie,” Cronea said. “I never saw a man murdered while I was with Campbell.”

Campbell the disciplinarian is best described by Cronea during an incident where the young cabin boy spilled a bucket of water on his captain’s feet.

“He grabbed me by the ears, bounced me up and down on the deck a few times, then he stood me upon the breech of a pivot gun and made me stand there about a half-hour without falling off,” Cronea recalled.

The *Concord* was most likely one of the 14 ships Lafitte lost during the great hurricane of 1818. He was in command of the second of his ships named *Hotspur* when Cronea joined the crew. Cronea was one of 14 other Frenchmen who deserted a French warship in New York and signed up as privateers on a ship recruiting crews for Lafitte.

The 15 Frenchmen caught up with the *Hotspur* at Padre Island in April 1820. At the time the ship’s crew of 40 was about half the usual number and included one man known as “Crazy” Ben Dollivar. Dollivar had fought with Lafitte during the battle of New Orleans and he was destined to become something of a local legend around Galveston during his later years.

One of the new crewmen was a former French naval officer named Gustave Duval. Campbell made Duval his first mate, a decision that nearly cost Campbell his life.

Several months later, Duval conspired with the rest of the Frenchmen — save Cronea — and deck officers Thomas Cox and James Clark to seize control of the ship, kill the remainder of the crew, and divide all the loot aboard. They planned to mutiny while they were on watch and Campbell and the rest of the crew were below deck.

Whether the conspirators were trying to steady their nerves or find some courage, they began drinking rum before the mutiny

began. Campbell came up on deck and was confronted by the only conspirator sober enough to wield a knife.

Campbell hurried below deck and armed the rest of his crew. They killed all of the conspirators at the cost of two of their own.

Soon after, the *Hotspur* ran aground near the mouth of the Mermentau River in south-



*Spanish coins encrusted with centuries of sea deposits.*

west Louisiana. Campbell managed to save only a few of the valuables aboard the ship. When he returned to Campeche, Lafitte gave his favorite captain command of another privateer. But Campeche's days were numbered and Campbell never again sailed as a privateer.

Life at Campeche was particularly lonesome for Mary Campbell because her husband remained at sea for long periods of time, but living conditions were far from austere. Lafitte kept the settlement well supplied with provisions from New Orleans and captured prizes. Some of the goods were luxuries rarely seen in frontier towns, although she never mentioned in her memoirs the nature of those luxuries.

Campeche in its last years was a far cry from the settlement the Campbells found when they first arrived. Decades later Mary Campbell recalled finding about 100 crudely built huts, many with just sailcloth covering the windows. The settlement comprised a mixed population of nationalities and languages. There were only two wives but there was an assortment of mistresses.

Despite the mixture of races and languages, Campeche's residents "were, as a general thing, friendly toward each other, bickerings and hard feelings among the families being of rare occurrence," she noted. "Society at Galveston Island, whatever may be said of its morals, began to have the elements of permanency."

Evidently Mary Campbell lacked the power to foretell the future. Lafitte's second privateering empire began collapsing in 1818 and lasted only three more years. A great hurricane struck the island in 1818, killing hundreds of people, flattening most of the buildings in the settlement and sinking several ships, including three heavily laden with looted

goods. These three ships broke free from their anchorage at Virginia Point, near present day Texas City, and were never seen again.

By 1818 the fledgling American government had grown tired of Lafitte's exploits. The country's official position was that it owed a duty to other nations to protect the free flow of commerce. One of the few stumbling blocks to America establishing a friendship with Spain was the continued attacks on Spanish shipping in the Gulf of Mexico, a subject the Spanish ambassador frequently and vehemently protested to Washington, D.C.

It did not help Lafitte's position that a couple of his more outlandish captains broke Lafitte's cardinal rule and attacked American shipping.

President James Monroe dispatched Secretary of War George Graham to Galveston to put an end to the Lafitte's settlement and privateering activities.

Graham wrote of his meeting with Lafitte in a letter to Secretary of State John Quincy Adams dated August 1818.

It was obvious that Lafitte knew what was coming. Graham wrote that Lafitte was aware he was called a "smuggler, pirate and enemy to the country."

"That as to being a smuggler. That was true, but that many who branded him with the appellation were not less guilty in that virtue, tho' (sic) more covertly so," Graham wrote. "His captures had been exclusively confined to Spanish vessels and property and that he had paid rigorous respect to the flags of every neutral nation as well as from feeling as from principle and that as to the American flag he not only respected it but it afforded him the greatest pleasure to render a service to an American vessel."

Graham conveyed to Lafitte the President's admiration for Lafitte's service during the Battle of New Orleans. The President, said Graham, knew what could have happened had Lafitte agreed to the British proposition. There is little doubt that the raids on American vessels prompted Lafitte's expulsion, but Graham passed it off as the duty the nation owed other nations.

"This is a measure dictated as well by the duties which they owed to other nations — that the revenue of the United States was derived almost exclusively from duties on imports, that he was well acquainted with the facilities of smuggling along our whole coast and that he heretofore had been checked more by the moral habits of the people than by the severity of the law, or to the vigilance of the Customs House officers ..."

Noting that much of the plundered goods were offered for sale in New Orleans, Graham

told Lafitte that the United States government could not “permit an establishment where vessels and property were brought in and sold without regular condemnation to exist even in their immediate neighborhood, but in particular within the limits that they claimed to be theirs.”

Lafitte countered, telling Graham that the amount of goods taken by his men had been “very much exaggerated, that with the exception of negroes it had not been large,” Graham wrote.

Once again, Lafitte spoke of his respect for the United States and that “he should always be disposed to acquiesce in its views and that he would return such in an answer to my letter as would be satisfactory,” Graham wrote.

In essence, Lafitte agreed to leave Campeche and asked only that he be given two or three months to recall his privateers and recover his property.

Graham’s visit to Galveston apparently opened his eyes to the island’s strategic importance — an issue either unknown to or ignored by the American government.

“Galveston is in a position of much more importance than the government has hitherto supposed,” Graham wrote Adams. “It is the key to the greatest and best part of the province of Texas and the possession of it is indispensably necessary for the suppression of the most extensive ... system of smuggling that has ever been carried on in the United States, and which from the nature of the adjacent country can never be checked while Galveston is occupied by any other authority than that of the United States.”

The two or three months Lafitte requested turned into two years with no real let up in activity. By 1820 the United States had tolerated enough and President Madison sent the warship *USS Enterprise* to Galveston. It docked in Galveston in late 1820 and Lt. Larry Kearney ordered Lafitte off the island.

Lafitte continued to stall for several more months until May 1821, when Kearney returned with a fleet of ships. With the fleet’s guns leveled at Campeche, Kearney delivered the President’s final ultimatum — leave or be pummeled to rubble.

That night sailors aboard the American ships watched as Campeche burst into flames. By morning only smoldering ruins remained. Lafitte and most of his men had gone. Despite entreaties from their friend and leader to leave with him, the Campbells chose to sail to New Orleans with their remaining valuables.

James Campbell worked as a merchant for about a year before the couple returned to Texas and lived in several places before eventually settling on 1,476 acres at Campbell’s Bayou,

near present day Texas City, in 1838. James Campbell became a farmer — the very occupation that had sent him in search of Lafitte in the first place.

There at Campbell’s Bayou, the couple raised a family and by all accounts, James Campbell lived out his life as a quiet and productive citizen. He died at home on May 5, 1856.

His obituary, published May 27, 1856, in the *Galveston Weekly News*, heralded the death “of an old pioneer” and Lafitte’s “favorite Lieutenant at this place over thirty years ago.

“Campbell always spoke of Lafitte as sailing

under letters of marque, that he was a highly honorable man and a privateer, but unhesitatingly denied the general impression that he was a pirate,” the obituary read. “Many times Campbell had, in this vicinity, frequent skirmishes with the (Karankawa) Indians. He was the last of Lafitte’s men left on this Bay.”

Mary Campbell died at home on January 5, 1884, at age 84. Her obituary in the *Galveston Daily News* spoke of her strong feelings for Lafitte.

“Of her husband’s commander, she was never known to speak save in terms of kindness and with respect. That he was a smuggler and slaver might have been — that he was a privateer, certainly; but that he was a pirate — NEVER! Such was the old lady’s firm and unshaken position toward the memory of Lafitte.”

Crazy Ben Dollivar was a common sight at Galveston’s waterfront bars after he gave up his life at sea. His nickname came from a combination of things. Most locals considered him “tetched in the haid,” as W.T. Block Jr. puts it. He sometimes muttered to himself or raved incoherently, and his pitifully scarred face lent a touch of an insane look to his expressions, notes Block.

He was also considered crazy for the way he lived. His home consisted of a 10 by 10 hovel on the beach covered with sailcloth and opened at both ends to the north and south.

“Usually the southerly breezes tempered the hot breath of the summers, but the chilling northers howled through its openings during



Treasure recovered in 1967 from a shipwreck in the Gulf of Mexico.

the cold months,” writes Block. “The seasons, however, meant very little to Ben, who seldom wore a shirt and no coat at all, and consequently became as bronzed as an Indian.”

Odder still, Dollivar rarely worked and yet he paid for all of his drinks with Spanish gold doubloons. Speculation was that Dollivar knew where Lafitte had buried his treasure near Clear Creek. Some stories have it that Dollivar admitted as much during alcohol-induced fogs.

Block maintains that Dollivar never revealed the source of his wealth, answering such inquiries by saying “Ah gits ‘em from a big sea chest down in the *Hotspur*’s bilge.”

Lafitte is known to have paid Dollivar like any other crewman. Townsend believes Dollivar took his earnings and hid them somewhere, using them as his bank account until he died.

“If he happened to know where Lafitte had buried some of his treasure, it is possible that he got some of it before Lafitte came back for it, but I suspect he had his own,” says Townsend. “That is totally speculation.”

His presence on Galveston Island was usually noted by his stupored presence in any one of a number of bars or by the old whale boat turned upside down outside his hovel. Every so often, Dollivar raised the sail on the boat and pushed off into Galveston Bay.

He always returned with a new supply of doubloons and he sometimes returned to his hovel to find holes in the sand left by people trying to find his secret stash.

Dollivar carried on in this way until about 1858, when he was found dead at the mouth of Clear Creek. Some stories said he drowned, others that his throat was cut, but most concede he was the victim of foul play after refusing to reveal the location of his hidden treasure.

Cronea was the last of Lafitte’s pirates living around Galveston Bay. He had deserted the *Hotspur* when it ran aground and lived for awhile in Louisiana, where



Charles Cronea’s grave in the High Island cemetery.

he married. The couple moved back to Texas and for the rest of their lives lived in either Jefferson or Chambers counties.

He was living in what is now Bridge City in Jefferson County when the Texas Revolution began. Joining up with a small band of other farmers, the group eventually fought in the decisive Battle of San Jacinto in 1836. It would prove to be the last great adventure of his life. After that, Cronea settled down to a rather uneventful life as a farmer in Sabine Pass. History notes that he married twice more and raised a large family.

Most of his children married and settled in High Island and the Boliver Peninsula. During his final years, Cronea followed his children to High Island, where he raised watermelons. He died March 4, 1893 and was buried in the High Island cemetery, where his grave is marked by a historic marker.

His obituary in the March 6 issue of the *Galveston Daily News* noted with sadness the passing of an era.

*“In the death of Charles Cronea, the last of Lafitte’s band, so far as is known, has passed away. Few besides him, who took part in the Battle of San Jacinto, are alive today. Comparatively few of the Mexican War veterans are now alive. As a character, Charles Cronea was unique, childlike, and lovable. With his death Lafitte becomes a thing of the past.”*

And what of Lafitte?

After he left Campeche his fate became just as mysterious as his life prior to New Orleans. Some stories place him as the

leader of a pirate gang in Santo Domingo while others say he settled in Charleston, SC. Still other stories have him fighting South American nationalists with Simon Bolivar or dying of disease near the Yucatan.

Townsend goes back to Lafitte’s diaries to answer the question.

“There is a grave in Galina,

IL, right across the river from St. Louis, which many authorities say is Lafitte’s,” offers Townsend. “In his diaries Lafitte says he used the name Lofland and he owned a gunpowder manufacturing company which was very well known. He listed a number of steamships that he owned. I have never tried to check the registry of them to see who owned them. I’m not sure that would have told me anything. To me it goes back to, ‘Do you believe the diaries?’ I do because no one has brought anything to me to prove they are fakes.”

The era of large scale piracy and privateering pretty much ended after the destruction of Campeche for a number of reasons.

“You had an organized U.S. Navy task force down there with small fast ships that were exactly what the pirates did not want to face,” Townsend says. “Once the Texas coast was no longer useable, that left you the Yucatan. The Yucatan is probably easier for those squadrons to come into and clean out than Texas is because you have pretty deep water right up to the shore in most places. Mexico’s Campeche is a much easier approach by sea than Galveston, even today.

“It had also ceased to be a good business,” he continues “There were not enough ships out there, you had too many people against you and it was too hard to get goods into the United States. The more civilized the United States became, the harder it was to smuggle merchandise in. The time had passed for it.”

# Modern day pirates

*We're rascals, scoundrels, villains and knaves.  
Drink up me 'earties, Yo Ho!  
We're devils and black sheep, really bad eggs!  
Drink up me 'earties, Yo Ho!  
Yo Ho, Yo Ho! A pirate's life for me*

— ©1967 XAVIER ATENCIO & GEORGE BRUNS

Piracy never disappeared totally from this planet. If anything it went through the equivalent of corporate downsizing for a century or so. Following World War II, piracy once again began to grow on a global scale as its limiting factors underwent change.

Many countries have decreased the size of their militaries — including navies — resulting in fewer international patrols. Technology has enabled modern vessels to carry huge cargoes and be operated by fewer crewmen. Gone, too, are the guns that once protected merchant ships.

Technology has also aided pirates. With advanced global positioning equipment, cell phones and high powered computers, pirates can selectively pick and stalk their prey. They no longer need to use cannons when modern arms dealers can supply them with assault rifles and shoulder-launched grenades carried aboard speedboats.

Countries that once mounted anti-piracy efforts to protect their merchant fleets no longer do so because most of the world's ships fly under flags of convenience. A flag of convenience ship is one that flies the flag of a country other than the country of ownership. They do so because registration fees are cheap, there are low or no taxes and owners can employ cheap labor. Some of the more notable flags of convenience are Panama, Honduras and Liberia.

Piracy today occurs at a rate that is as great or greater than the height of the Golden Age. The International Maritime Bureau (IMB) reported in May 2003 that there were 103 reported pirate attacks globally in the first three months of this year — equaling the total number of attacks reported in all of 1993.

Sadly, those are just the attacks reported. The IMB, which is the crime prevention division of



*Indonesian pirates preparing for an attack.*

the International Chamber of Commerce, says that piracy is a highly underreported crime, making it nearly impossible to determine its cost in terms of money (undoubtedly in the hundreds of millions if not billions of dollars annually) and lives (in one incident in 1999, 23 crewmen were killed in the waters off Hong Kong by pirates dressed as Chinese officials).

Unless a ship is taken or someone is killed, a ship owner will pay more to recover stolen equipment or cargoes than it is worth so the crime is not reported. The waters of Indonesia, particularly the South China Sea, are the current hotspot for piracy. Other problem areas include the waters near Bangladesh, Nigeria and Brazil.



*(Above) Two of the pirates accused of killing Peter Blake. The Philippine Navy patrols for pirates and smugglers (left).*

The IMB reports that bulk carriers like container ships are the most likely to face attack, and the type of attack varies. Frequently pirates will plant one of their own among the crew to provide details on cargo and location to the rest of the band. A number of heavily armed pirates in a speedboat will follow the ship and board it using grappling hooks. Many times the planted crewman will incapacitate the bridge crew to make boarding easier.

Once onboard the gang usually robs the ship's crew, steals electronic and other equipment and robs the captain's safe, which can contain thousands of dollars.

In some cases the entire ship is hijacked, repainted and renamed. It is then either sold for profit or it becomes a phantom ship. The pirates hire out themselves and the ship to carry a legitimate cargo and then they sail off, never to be seen again.

Particularly in the waters off China, an approaching Chinese Coast Guard boat is not a comforting sight. As in the 1999 attack, some pirates disguise themselves as Chinese officials. In other cases, the sailors really are Chinese coastguardsmen with a little time on their hands and an itch for profit.

Commercial sailors are battling back.

They now stand pirate watches and quickly muster the crew at the first hint of trouble. Their weapons of choice are fire hoses, which are often enough deterrent to make pirates break off an attack.

Piracy in the Caribbean is largely confined to attacks on private vessels. Thieves tend to steal money, valuables, electronic equipment and spare parts — anything they can sell.

Sailing champion Peter Blake, who led New Zealand to America's Cup victories in 1995 and 2000, was shot and killed by pirates who boarded his yacht anchored in the mouth of the Amazon River.

The hooded assailants, who were later captured, took a spare engine and several watches from the boat.

During the 1980s, Tom Townsend earned money sailing yachts from the manufacturer or seller to a buyer. He heard talk around the docks of pirates boarding a Lykes Line ship in the Yucatan Straights and of yachts being attacked with great frequency.

"We were very aware of piracy," says Townsend. "We ran very well armed. I can't say I ever had any trouble. We had three or four incidences where we were threatened, but we were very aggressive in our defense and they went away."

# *When the legend becomes fact, print the legend*

*We're beggars and blighters and ne'er-do-well cads.*

*Drink up me 'earties, Yo Ho!*

*Aye! But we're loved by our mummies and dads!*

*Drink up me 'earties, Yo Ho!*

*Yo Ho, Yo Ho! A pirate's life for me.*

— ©1967 XAVIER ATENCIO & GEORGE BRUNS

**G**rowing up in Texas City, Marie McGrory's parents rarely spoke of her great-great-grandfather — James Campbell.

“I guess they didn't want to admit that they were descendants of a pirate,” says McGrory, now in her 80s. “But I was proud of it because it is so different.”

Perhaps it is best that pirate history is so firmly rooted in folklore. Not knowing the absolute truth — having to depend on imagination for answers — makes studying our pirate heritage more fun.

J. Frank Dobie characterized pirate legends well when he wrote of Lafitte, “Maybe he was not a pirate. Maybe, as he always claimed, he was only a gentleman smuggler and privateer. Certainly he was and yet remains a mystery, one of the mysteries of the ever-surrounding ocean that is called the Gulf of Mexico. His birth is a mystery. His life on land and sea is a mystery. His death is a mystery.

“Patriot and pirate, he was — and is — legend, romance, paradox, mystery. His whole life, as Montaigne defined death, was a grand peut-être — a great perhaps. He must have been a puzzle to himself. Trying to unravel that puzzle has made it to me only more intricate. Truth is precious, and so is an interesting story, even though the facts therein be overshadowed by fable. It is too late for history, ever leaning toward legend, to sift the absolute story of Lafitte; and legend, ever contemptuous of history, is still expanding and spinning it.” ■



*Padre Island National Seashore has a history as old as the counties it protects.*

At  
the  
water's  
  
edge

BY  
JEAN O'DETTE

## *Exploring Kleberg, Kenedy and Willacy Counties*

A static-filled voice scratches out over Darrell Echols' two-way radio. A melon-headed whale is stranded nearly 30 miles down the Padre Island National Seashore. After a few phone calls, Echols, a resources management specialist for the National Park Service, assures the voice that help is on the way. Echols is just getting started on what is shaping up to be another hectic day. Besides the whale, there are endangered Kemp's ridley turtle eggs incubating just down the hall that will be hatching anytime, the Sierra Club wants answers about oil drilling on the seashore and the radio is talking again – this time about some equipment that needs to be put away.

On this hot May morning, Echols sits at his desk in front of a computer full of unread emails. He runs his hands through his brown floppy hair and sighs before responding to the voice on the other end of the radio.

He handles many tasks with surprising calmness and he responds to each issue in turn with patient efficiency. With 65.5 miles of undeveloped beaches to look after, the small staff working for the Padre Island National Seashore has its work cut out for it.



Padre Island National Seashore, established by Congress on Sept. 28, 1962, stretches across parts of three counties — Kleberg, Kenedy and Willacy — reaching from the outskirts of Corpus Christi to beginning of the resort community of South Padre Island. Comprised of 130,454 undeveloped acres, it was also designated a globally important bird area on October 26, 1998. The National Seashore, a segment of the barrier islands that make up North and South Padre Island, also has a history as old as the counties it protects.

Spanish exploration in the area began as early as 1000 A.D., but Europeans established no major settlements until the 1700s. Mexican and Spanish land grants were made in the area during this time and ranching began to take hold. It wasn't until after the U.S.—Mexican War (1846-1848) that American settlement began to truly increase.

Among the first to introduce the idea of ranching in the area, Padre Jose Nicolas Balli, a Spanish missionary priest for whom the entire 110 miles of barrier islands are named, is credited with much of the early settlement of the counties. He established a mission to bring Christianity to the Karankawa Indians and brought cattle from the mainland to the island in 1820 to keep them safe from raiders during the Mexican revolution. Eventually, the ranch was abandoned due to a hurricane in 1844.

Echols points out that the threat of hurricanes makes the island vitally important to the well being of the mainland. "People don't realize that without this long strip of beach here, the mainland (of the counties) would take a severe beating by high winds, hurricanes and storm surges," explains Echols.

This uniquely undeveloped seashore is part of the Texas coastal barrier islands that not only buffers the mainland from hurricanes and tropical storms, but also brings into existence the Laguna Madre.

Nearly 11,000 years ago, the first inhabitants of the area most likely crossed the Laguna seasonally. Archaeological evidence indicates that early inhabitants would boat to the



*Padre Jose Nicolas Balli*

barrier islands to enjoy fish and clams all summer before returning to the mainland for winter. Taking a walk down to the seashore, Echols explains that today the coastal and Intracoastal waters have been used to transport not only tourists and fishermen, but also oil and gas, commercial cargo and often, illegal substances and immigrants from Mexico.

Approaching the water, Echols's

attention is directed towards a designated dumping area for washed-ashore beach trash about 100 yards from the ocean. "See these bicycles here," Echols walks towards a heap of bent tire rims and rusted handle bars jutting out from a small mountain of junk. "Illegal immigrants come over in rafts from Mexico and many of them bring their own bikes with them hoping to cycle to freedom, but most of them end up arriving at the park only to be detained by the U.S. Border Patrol. Unfortunately we see a lot of abandoned bikes."

According to park officials, it is hard to estimate just how many illegal immigrants make it to the seashore and beyond. With a low number of patrol officers and a vast area of undeveloped beach with no paved roads, drug trafficking and refugees are two challenges. "We know there's a problem when we find things like these bikes or drug caches in the dunes," says Echols.

As Echols approaches the surf, a few people can be seen walking in pairs down the beach. Echols explains that these are volunteers and staff trained to look for Kemp's ridley turtles that may be coming up on the sand to nest. "As a matter of fact, if it weren't for these patrollers, we may never have even known about that whale stranded out there this morning," says Echols putting his hand to his temple and squinting



*Darryll Echols surveys washed-ashore beach trash noting bicycles abandoned by illegal immigrants.*

into the sun as if hoping to catch a glimpse of the rescue.

Meanwhile, back at the park headquarters, Donna Shaver is tuning into her two-way radio but not for updates on the whale rescue; she is keeping tabs on her turtle watching volunteers. Her long sandy blond hair hangs around her suntanned face, the tips dancing on her desk as she leans in to grab the walkie-talkie. Shaver, who has been with the

radioed from one of her volunteers that had just spotted a mother turtle digging in the sand to lay her eggs.

"I got there and checked the tags on the turtle," she says, her face glowing with the memory. "It was one of the original turtles from the first group nearly ten years earlier – it had come home to nest. "It was a pivotal day that I had been waiting years for, and lots of people helped get us there."

Shaver says she had always hoped, but never knew for sure that the turtles would come back until that day. "After the first one, we started seeing a lot of our old friends coming back – each one is special, and I feel like the proudest parent on earth," says Shaver with a smile, "I'm really protective."

Shaver has good reason to be protective. The Kemp's ridley is still one of the most endangered species in North America and among five threatened or endangered species of sea turtles found at the seashore. Her responsibilities of making sure the

eggs are incubated at the right temperatures (which determines the sex of the turtles) and that the turtles are unharmed can be overwhelming. Besides these factors, Shaver and her colleagues also have to keep in mind the oil and gas drilling that goes on at the seashore at certain times throughout the year.

Back in his office to check on the status of the stranded whale, Echols explains that although the National Seashore is protected by Congress, the mineral rights beneath the surface are owned by the state and private companies. "Because there has proven to be a significant amount of mineral resources here, the cost of the mineral rights is phenomenal," says Echols. He explains that the park would ideally like to buy the mineral rights thus stopping the commercial drilling, but he doesn't see that being a possibility financially.

"When the National Park was established, we had the choice of doing it

this way (without the mineral rights) or not having the Park at all," explains Echols. "What we have is a lot better than this island being open to development."

Echols says that the park sets a long list of guidelines for companies wishing to drill on the seashore. BNP Petroleum, (named after founder Paul Black and his wife Barbara — "Barbara 'N Paul") is the primary natural gas exploration drilling company that has been involved in the sites at Padre.

Besides going through extensive turtle training, BNP workers must comply with regulations on noise reduction and operation methods. Before work begins a bond must be put up by BNP, which is based in Corpus Christi, to cover any possible damages. Truck convoys are lead by monitors riding all-terrain vehicles who are trained to look for nesting turtles in advance of the trucks.

"We haven't had one incident of a turtle being hurt or hindered by these operations," says Echols who credits the success to detailed planning and preparation. In fact, a BNP employee who had gone through the turtle training discovered the first Kemp's ridley nest last season.

"Still, we're never going to please everyone," says Echols. The Sierra Club recently sued the National Park and BNP for not taking enough safety precautions of the Kemp's ridley turtles, but the case was thrown out due to lack of evidence. One of the arguments Pat Suter, board member for the Sierra Club in Corpus Christi, makes is that the National Seashore was not intended for drilling.

"The public is given a very bad deal," says Suter, "They don't come out here to see all these big trucks churning up the beach and coming between them and the water." She objects to the fact that no money from the drilling goes to the federal government. "It costs the National Seashore a lot of money to police what BNP is doing, and BNP does not give one penny to the federal government," she says.

Suter explains that even though Padre Island National Seashore is a federally run national park, there's no money or aid given to the federal



Donna Shaver examines a Kemp's Ridley turtle as it returns to the National Seashore to nest.

park since her first summer as a college intern in 1980, says she never imagined how drastically that summer would change her life. Today she is the station leader and research biologist in charge of all of the Kemp's ridley turtle activity.

"This has been a long hard process," she explains. The project started as an international experimental from 1978 to 1988 to see if Kemp's ridley turtle eggs from Mexico — hatched and released at the National Seashore — would one day return to the same place to lay their own eggs. The purpose of the project was to establish a secondary nesting colony of Kemp's ridley turtles outside Mexico as a safeguard against extinction.

After the first eggs hatched and the baby Kemp's ridley turtles were released into the sea, Shaver says she felt like a mother who had just sent her innocent children into the great unknown. Years later, in the summer of 1996, Shaver remembers getting

government from the drilling because that was not in the original contract in 1962. "I understand that the National Park is caught between a rock and a hard place," says Suter. "I think they are doing the best they can, but it costs them an awful lot of money and they get nothing out of this." Suter says that the Sierra Club is particularly interested in the safety of the Kemp's ridley turtles and it plans to continue fighting to end drilling on the seashore.

Commissioner Jerry Patterson of the Texas General Land Office says that from the State's point of view the drilling is a positive thing. Patterson explains that money from leases sold to the drilling companies as well as a percentage of their revenues from the gas drilled goes directly into the Texas permanent school fund.

"I have heard people saying that (President) Bush is opening the (Padre Island National) Seashore to drilling, but the truth is that Seashore has been open to drilling since 1951. Bush has nothing to do with it," says Patterson. "We are not jeopardizing the turtles. We can have turtles and we can have additional revenue for education — it's not an either/or choice."

Scott Taylor, executive vice president and general counsel for BNP, thinks the business is good for the city of Corpus Christi and the surrounding counties. He says that the federal government doesn't receive any revenue from the drilling because unlike the state they don't own any of the minerals. "That's just the way Congress established the enabling legislation that allowed the National Seashore to come into being," he says. "That's the legal framework under which we operate — we have no control over that."

Taylor says BNP has spent in excess of \$8 million acquiring state-owned leases — and that money is already in the state Permanent School Fund and being used accordingly.

He also says the traffic is a misperception among at least some of the public. "The traffic volume is higher than normal when the drilling is ongoing, but these are temporary operations — sometimes as short as 30 days and sometimes

90 days. The noise is also buffeted — it's not like a conventional drilling operation."

Taylor says once the drilling is done, only one or two pickup trucks are needed to maintain the site during the production stage. "We consider the Padre Island National Seashore, and all the regulatory agencies we deal with to be our partners and that's the way we approach it," concludes Taylor. "We believe balance is achievable — that's the balance between protecting and preserving all the environmental resources and at the same time responsibly developing energy resources to meet America's needs — i.e. natural gas."

Activities besides drilling include windsurfing and fishing — and this area is claimed by many to be the best in the world for both. Perhaps Walt Kittleberger knows more about fishing in these parts than just about anybody.

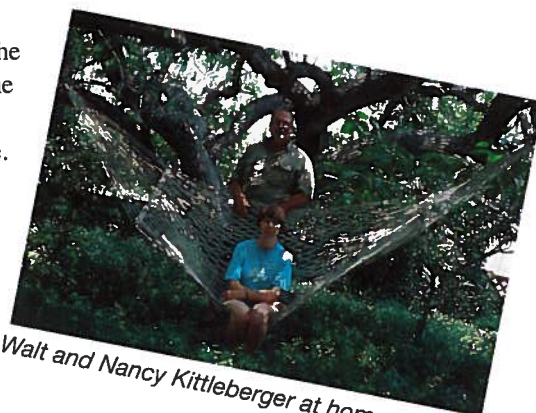
About 70 miles south of Corpus Christi, in the little fishing village of Port Mansfield, Walt Kittleberger, a local fishing guide and chairman of the board of trustees for the Lower Laguna Madre Foundation (LLMF), is beginning his day. He has lived in Port Mansfield for 17 years now, and he wouldn't want to be anywhere else. "I lived in Houston for long enough — this is the kind of place I have always been looking for," he smiles.

Port Mansfield, located in Willacy County, was originally intended to be a commercial port when dredged in 1950, but it has never been profitably used for that purpose. Instead it has grown into a fisherman's paradise. Nancy Kittleberger, Walt's wife and strong advocate for the area, says that many fishermen brag so much about the place that their families and friends often end up coming along on the next fishing trip. "This place has really grown," she adds, "and yet it's still so small — you can't find a better place to raise kids."

The Kittlebergers raised both of their children here in a house nestled in rich breezy foliage within a



*Port Mansfield as it looks today.*



*Walt and Nancy Kittleberger at home.*



*Kittleberger in the Laguna Madre.*



*Port Mansfield, a fisherman's paradise.*

stone's throw from the water's edge. Nancy admits that her children have moved on with no plans of settling down in the area, but she credits their success and love of nature to their upbringing here. "We don't want to see this place become a commercial port where trucks are flooding our one lane streets and cargo containers barricade the shoreline," she says looking out over the water at an early summer sunset.

Willacy county officials may have a different idea. They are looking into the

possibility of making Port Mansfield more suitable for commercial cargo traffic from the Gulf of Mexico with the hope of boosting the county's struggling economy. Until now, the port has remained small with relatively low traffic due to the depth at which the channel was dredged.

Kittelberger explains that the

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is in charge of maintenance dredging and dredging for commercial purposes. It is the Corps of Engineers that must determine the economic value dredging the Mansfield Channel could bring to the area. Before the Corps will continue or increase dredging, it must determine if there will be a substantial economic increase after dredging. The economic value in this case is primarily determined by how much commercial cargo is being brought into the area — or could be brought in if the area was properly dredged.

As Kittleberger skims the shallow waters at dawn in his small charter boat, he points out that the Corps doesn't take into consideration the economic benefits of nature or recreational fishing. "It's easy to calculate how much money comes into an area by dropping off commercial-sized containers of cargo," he says. "But what about the value of beauty, nature, birds, fish and sea grass? There is so much here to be lost, but it can't be added up on a

calculator in the formula the Corps is giving us to work with."

If county officials agree to begin commercial shipping out of Port Mansfield a major deep dredging project most likely will begin. This will deepen the Mansfield Channel to the Gulf of Mexico and likely increase barge traffic significantly. The Kittelbergers fear that if the Corps increases the dredging to make Port Mansfield capable of receiving commercial cargo, it will change the face of the town from a picturesque fishing village to an industrial shipping site.

Another dredging project nearby involves the Intracoastal Waterway. Kittelberger doesn't want dredging to increase here for environmental reasons. Looking at the overall picture, he feels it would ultimately be better for the ecosystem of the area if dredging were discontinued. "It's a give-and-take equation, but if dredging continues we won't have anything unique here," says Kittelberger.

Kittelberger makes it clear that there are two separate dredging issues. "One issue is the Mansfield Channel where dredging will affect the town and the lifestyles of the people who live here," explains Kittelberger. The other dredging project involves the Intracoastal Waterway, used primarily for transportation of petroleum barges. "The Intracoastal Waterway dredging will continue to kill sea grass that is growing on the Laguna floor. That kind of thing can't be replaced easily — if ever." Kittleberger explains that the Laguna Madre is unique because of its high salinity. He says water like that of the Laguna can only be found in a few other places in the world. "It is a very salty, shallow body of water and the biological make up of the Laguna would be altered irreversibly by this dredging," he says.

In his vessel he approaches what looks like thin islands. "These are what I call spoil islands," he says. Kittleberger says that the thin strips of desolate land were created from dredged material from the Corps of Engineers. These islands are connected by material only a few inches under the water. "That's why you don't see any birds or wildlife on these," says Kittleberger. "Coyotes and other predators can run all the way down to the tip of the last island only getting their paws wet — therefore no birds will stay here and these serve really no purpose to the birding population."

What to do with the dredged material is



*Aerial view of Port Mansfield (lower right corner), the Laguna Madre and the Mansfield Channel stretching between the port and Padre Island in the distance.*

also an item of debate. The King Ranch strongly opposes dredged material being dumped on its portion of the seashore. The LLMF, a local environmental group, would like the dredged material from the Intracoastal Waterway deposited in the Gulf of Mexico where there is less harm of it affecting the ecosystem of the Laguna Madre.

Kittleberger understands that the county needs an economic income, but his wish is that more people would start looking at the natural course the area has taken and expound upon ecotourism instead of industrial growth.

This is easier said than done according to Mike Wilson, port director and general manager of the Willacy County Navigation District. Wilson and Kittelberger have butted heads on the issues of the community's growth since Wilson took office 11 years ago.

"I actually live a few houses down from Walt," says Wilson. "I guess you could almost call us neighbors," he says looking out his office window in Raymondville, the Willacy County seat located about 25 miles north of Port Mansfield.

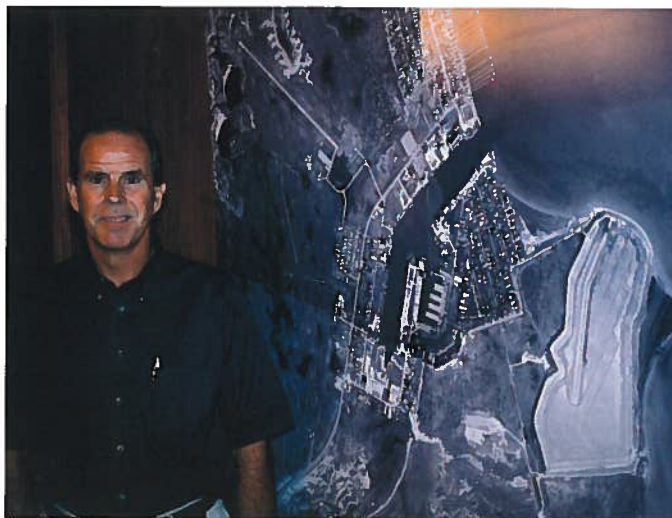
As he moves to the conference room he points to a chair. "That's where Walt sits during the meetings," he says shaking his head, "He sure is passionate about the issues here."

Wilson is passionate about them too. While in favor of the proposed dredging, Wilson understands Kittelberger's concerns. "I love where I live," he says. "I don't want the place to change into an industrial port like Houston or Corpus Christi either, but I think there's a compromise here somewhere."

Wilson has hired professionals to develop a viable economic plan for the county. "We have a real problem of poverty in this county," says Wilson. "About 90 percent of the population in Raymondville is Hispanic and 10 percent Anglo. In Port Mansfield those numbers are reversed."

Wilson sees fighting for dredging in the port as his only option. "If we don't try to prove to the Corps that the dredging is economically beneficial, what will we have as an economic base to provide the basic needs to our residents?" he questions.

Within his own office, Wilson employs two women who come from migrant families. "I know these families personally and they have to continually move around the country just to provide food for themselves and their children," says Wilson. "I can't just ignore



*Mike Wilson, pictured next to an aerial of Port Mansfield, sees fighting for dredging in the port as his only option.*

these basic needs of the county's lower-income residents," he sighs.

Wilson also explains the concept of a ferryboat shuttle between Port Mansfield and the southern tip of the National Seashore. "As it is now, local residents who don't own a boat or shorefront property rarely have access to the water's edge," he says.

Wilson believes that if a ferry were in operation, lower-income residents could ride to the island and enjoy the park and fish much more easily. It would be another way to get to the park as well, which currently only has one road leading to it from Corpus Christi via the JFK Causeway.

Darrell Echols frowns at the idea. He doubts advocates for the ferry will ever get backing from the National Park Service without proper environmental analysis and compliance. "The ferry would bring people to the park, but I don't know if it would be the large numbers that they are hoping for," says Echols.

To institute the use of a ferry service several changes would have to occur in the park. A paved road would have to be put in all the way down the 60-mile seashore, restroom facilities put in place, the turtle volunteer camp at that end of the island would have to be altered, more patrol officers would be needed and trash facilities would have to be installed. "We've got our hands full already," says Echols, "I just don't think people realize all the other issues a ferry would bring with it."

Back in Raymondville, Willacy County Judge Simon Salinas ponders the idea. “I’m for anything that will increase growth – I think the ferry would be good.” The white-haired judge goes on to discuss the drinking water shortage in the area. He says the county is looking into tapping into ground water sources and also the process of desalinization of ocean water. “Water is our biggest issue with trying to grow,” he sighs scratching his wrinkled brow.

Most of all, Salinas worries about the low-income level of his residents, the quality of their education and the high crime rate. “I’ve known the new and the old of this area,” says Salinas. “The depression was nothing here – because nobody had nothing,” he grins with sad eyes. Salinas, who traveled extensively all over the world in the military, always knew he would eventually come back home. “My roots are here,” he smiles. “I think that’s what holds the Valley together – its roots.”

The roots in all three counties are deep. With a long tradition of ranching, the King Ranch, a sprawling acreage encompassing most of Kleberg county has become famous for many things: its own unique breed of cattle, Triple Crown winning quarter horses, innovative agriculture methods, and recently leather goods and its own line of pickup truck.

The King Ranch along with most other local ranching families is dedicated to preserving the area’s wildlife and natural resources and has made a commitment to keep development off the land. The Ranch is partnering with Texas A&M University at Kingsville to start the King Ranch Institute for Ranch Management (KRIRM). The new Institute was developed in cooperation with the King Ranch as part of the Ranch’s 150th anniversary with the intent to train students how to become better ranch managers.

The Institute will cover how to balance ranching, hunting, birding and maintaining a healthy ecosystem while at the same time operating a productive ranch. “Understanding the way things work together is the key to preserving



*Echols believes the National Seashore can benefit not only turtles, birds and nature but also the human spirit.*

the land and also making a living from it,” says Dr. Paul Genho, vice-president and general manager of ranching and livestock at the King Ranch. “Without proper training, these skills would take a lifetime to learn.” Genho thinks Texas A&M-Kingsville, located in the heart of this ranching legacy, is a perfect place for the Institute. “This Institute will help enhance the quality of ranching not only in this area but throughout the state and nation,” says Genho.

Another proposal to enhance the economy of the area that has been in discussion for several years is the development of a spaceport. This would be a commercial launching pad for spacecraft. The National Park Service voices concern over safety and environmental issues due to potential fall out from rockets, noise and pollution. The King Ranch is opposed to the idea for the same reasons, but government officials in each of the three counties are hopeful and excited about winning the bid to begin building this port.

“Think of all the jobs that would be created,” says Judge Salinas. “It also has the opportunity to bring higher educational opportunities to the area.” Many believe this part of Texas is an ideal location for such a venture since there are large areas of land and relatively low population density.

Echols says he doesn’t know what the likelihood of the spaceport actually being built is, but he knows that this type of aircraft over Padre Island would force the Park to close designated areas of water to boaters and the general public.

Back at the national seashore, Tony Amos, director of the Animal Rehab Center (ARC) in Port Aransas, and his group of rescuers seem to be reaching rocket speed as they zoom by Darrell Echols’ office in a blur. A black whale fin is just visible hanging over the tailgate. Echols tips his hat. The whale has been rescued and is on its way to the aquarium to be treated for any illnesses. Echols breathes a sigh of relief.

“There’s always something going on out here,” says Echols. “A lot of people don’t think there’s anything beyond Corpus Christi except South Padre Island, but there’s really some of the best natural treasures right here in between the two. People are amazed when they find out about all the things going on out here and the fact that this shoreline is so unique.” Echols smiles. “Still, the economic benefit here to me is the benefit of the human spirit. This is a one-of-a-kind place to get away from everything and contemplate on nature and yourself and the universe.” ■

## Glossary

Know it or not, pirates of past centuries left more than stories of buried treasure and high-seas adventure behind. They also contributed a rich lexicon, including some terms still used today, to Western culture.

Here are a few examples:

- **Avast:** An order for someone to stop what he is doing. It is probably a corruption of the phrase “hold fast.”
- **Bamboozle:** A tactic of deception whereby a pirate vessel flew the flag of a nation other than its own to hide its identity from potential victims.
- **Careen:** To keel a ship over on its side in order to clean or repair its hull.
- **Cutlass:** A short, curved sword with a broad blade preferred by buccaneers.
- **Devil-to-Pay:** Originally, this phrase denoted the task of caulking the ship’s longest seam, or “devil,” with pitch, or “pay.” It was an exhausting and extremely unpopular job.
- **Doubloon:** Gold Spanish coin. A typical sailor had to work about seven weeks to earn one doubloon.
- **Freebooter or filibuster:** Another name for a pirate.
- **Guineaman:** A slave ship, particularly one engaged in trade along the Guinea Coast of West Africa.
- **Jolly Roger:** Common name given to a pirate flag. There was no single Jolly Roger, but rather a variety of them featuring common elements such as skulls, crossed bones and swords.
- **Keel haul:** A form of punishment where a man was tied with a towrope connected to the stern of the vessel and thrown overboard. As the ship accelerated, the victim found it increasingly difficult to clear the water’s surface and breath, resulting in near drowning or drowning.
- **Letters of marque:** Commissions or licenses usually granted by governments to fit out armed vessels to raid enemy merchant shipping and to commit other hostile acts that would otherwise be deemed piracy.
- **Maroon:** To abandon a person on a desolate island.
- **Marooners:** Name sometimes given to pirates because they used marooning as punishment.
- **Piece of eight:** One-eighth of a Spanish *real*, or silver dollar. The real was the primary Spanish currency in the new world. Each piece of eight was worth 12.5 cents and was known in America as a *bit* (of the two bits, four bits, six bits, a dollar cheer fame). Due to a chronic shortage of small change in colonial America, cutting coins like the real into pieces was common practice.
- **Pirate:** From the Greek *peirate*, meaning one who plunders on the sea.
- **Privateer:** Name given someone working for a particular government under letters of marque to raid merchant shipping of an unfriendly government.
- **Quarter:** Mercy shown to a defeated opponent.
- **Sloop:** A single-masted vessel favored by the pirates because of its shallow draught and maneuverability.
- **Spanish Main:** Originally the name given to Spanish-controlled land in the New World, the term later came to include the West Indies and the waters of the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico traveled by Spanish treasure ships.
- **Walk the plank:** A method of executing prisoners at sea by making them walk off the end of a board attached to the ship at one end and suspended over the water. Hollywood theatrics to the contrary, very few pirates dispatched prisoners in this manner.

## Articles of Conduct

Tyrannical pirate captains were few and far between. In fact, pirate ships were amazingly democratic places and with good reason. Pirate crews usually comprised former naval sailors and merchant seamen. In either case, they had their fill of captains who ruled with ultimate authority.

Most pirate crews operated under codes of conduct, or “articles,” that each crewman was required to sign and abide by. There were several variations on these articles, but the following is a good representation:

1. Every man shall obey civil command; the Captain shall have one full share and a half in all prizes; the Master, Carpenter, Boatswain and Gunner shall have one share and a quarter.
2. If any man shall offer to run away, or keep any secret from the Company, he shall be marooned with one bottle of powder, one bottle of water, and one small arm and shot.
3. If any man shall steal any thing in the Company, or game, to the value of a piece of eight, he shall be marooned or shot.
4. If at any time we should meet another marooner, and that man shall sign his Articles without the consent of our Company, he shall suffer such punishment as the Captain and Company shall think fit.
5. That man that shall strike another while these Articles are in force, shall receive Moses’s Law (that is 40 stripes lacking one) on the bare back.
6. That man that shall snap his arms, or smoke tobacco in the hold, without a cap to his pipe, or carry a candle lighted without a lantern, shall suffer the same punishment as in the former Article.
7. That man that shall not keep his arms clean, fit for an engagement, or neglect his business, shall be cut off from his share, and suffer such other punishment as the Captain and the Company shall think fit.
8. If any man shall lose a joint in time of an engagement, shall have 400 pieces of eight; if a limb, 800.
9. If at any time you meet with a prudent woman, that man that offers to meddle with her, without her consent, shall suffer present death.

